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## THE EDITOR

There has been some dissatisfaction expressed by different club-women at Mrs. Hamlin Garland's criticism of the artistic barrenness of our American life. Her address on "Possibilities of Sculpture in our Cities and Towns" was, it is true, an exposition of our omissions and errors in outdoor art—was more critical than constructive. This seems to the writer to be the proper way of getting at the question. If we are satisfied with our present conditions, what hope is there of improvement? We must see how lamentably deficient we are in examples of public art before we can take any steps toward filling the deficiency. We must carefully diagnose the case before we can prescribe a remedy. Any listener at the biennial convention of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, at Milwaukee, could not help but learn where the trouble lay, and if they cared, could have heard, also, many suggestions from Mrs. Garland pointing toward reform. We are so filled with pride at our American superiority that any criticism is received with scant enthusiasm. Nevertheless, there is much for us to learn, even if the medicine is unpleasant, and the subject of municipal art is one that is of general importance. We are far behind the cities and towns of the Old World in this regard. There is nothing strange in this; neither should it be considered strange or bad taste to be told the fact. Because we are in a primitive condition of public art is no reason why we should remain so. There is every reason why we should move on and up with rapid strides. We are a very rich and prosperous nation; we have a beautiful country, remarkably diversified in mountain, stream, and prairie, lake, plain, and sea; we have every variety and every opportunity. Why should we be indifferent to the improvements of these natural beauties that will give us and those who follow after ever-increasing pleasure? There is a general movement forward, we are happy to note, but little comparatively is being done. Any one of us may easily suggest improvements in his own neighborhood. Nothing is too small or unimportant to begin with. The notion that the work of artistic improvement in a town is finished when the common has been spotted with a bronze or cast-iron soldier, inclosed by a fence, is generally accepted. If the statue is a good one, it is a commencement. What about an attractive and simple fountain that has no utilitarian function beyond the one of giving pleasure and satisfying a little our craving for some form of beauty? Tasteful seats under shady trees, covered summer-houses in sightly places, better roads through pleasant woods and pastures, are all inexpensive, but would stimulate a love of beauty

and of nature for themselves. We should thank any one who would show us our faults. We are not thankful, because we do not care to be improved. We cannot live forever on criticism; we need something positive. It is true that we must clear the ground before we can expect any crop; and isn't it equally true that we should clear our surroundings of ugliness before we plant our beauty? We must cultivate the latter; the former seems able to take care of itself. What attractive cities and towns we might have if we only wanted them enough to go about improving them! We must first appreciate how ugly things are about us, and it will be easy to do the rest. The constructive part will almost take care of itself.

We need retreats in our cities and towns where, when fatigued by the toil and noise of work, we may rest and enjoy nature simply and quietly, where we may perhaps meditate and reflect. Who has time for meditation in our present rush for some particular bauble which seems so precious? Possibly, if we rested oftener, and enjoyed other things more, became closer in touch with Mother Nature, who has sweet solace for all her children, we might gain our prize the sooner and be in better form to appreciate it when it comes. Too often is it true of us in America that when our time arrives for rest and peace, surrounded by the best the world affords in luxury and comfort, we find we have lost the power of enjoyment. We have followed strange gods so long and ardently that beauty and peace have forgotten us, and fail to recognize us, plead we ever so earnestly. Some one has said he had enough to retire on, but nothing to retire to. Surely there is a happy balance of conditions in which we may live as we work. I believe the artist is the happiest of mortals, because, not only is his love in his work, but he is able to enjoy people and nature about him in periods of rest and recreation. His eyes are open; he sees things. He is neither a slave to business nor money-getting. He does his work, which is pleasure, and then takes time for other pleasures too. The business man pities the unbusinesslike ways of the professional man, little appreciating that there is something besides business—something that gives real pleasure, that opens the mind and raises it to a sweeter and clearer air. The artist needs no pity. He may be poor in worldly goods—it is fortunate for him that he be not too tempted—but he lives as he lives. The artist is happy in seeing more beauty in nature than one ever sees in "Bradstreet's." He is not waiting as most do for that long-postponed time of retirement, free from business worry, where he may take his ease under his own fig-tree. Misdirected industry sometimes buys the fig-tree, but it cannot purchase enjoyment.